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JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

ON

Community Development

THE PUBLICATIONS DIVISION

Shri Jawaharlal Nehru lending a hand in the construction of a village road at Alipur, near Delhi, at the inauguration of the Community Projects on October 2, 1952

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JAWAHARLAL NEHRU
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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

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A WORD OF EXPLANATION

Five short years ago Shri Jawaharlal Nehru as Prime Minister of India and as Chairman of the Central Committee for Community Development consecrated the programme of Community Development to the Nation. Community Development, as it has grown on the soil of India since, is a restatement in practice of the old concept "Live and let live" which is as ancient as man himself. The programme has grown in depth and width, far beyond all original calculations. It has acquired a significance, not merely for India but also for scores of other countries struggling likewise for light out of the darkness of poverty, ignorance and disease in which we grope today. The interest aroused on the wider horizon imposes on the workers engaged in this programme a still greater burden of responsibility for the task that lies ahead.

Community Development in India is growing in concept according to the genius of our own people, supported by such other kindred experiences as are available for assimilation from abroad. The main spark of the movement was kindled by the Prime Minister when he inaugurated the first Conference of Development Commissioners in May 1952. Those who attended the Conference or heard him face to face on other occasions have taken the charge according to their capacities. The success of the programme thus far has been to the extent that the original charge has travelled without serious attenuation during transit. With the programme expanding as it is, the stage has arrived to think seriously of

how to change those who carry the torch along the wide line of communications in distant and obscure outposts. Dwarfs that we are, we do not appear strong enough to transmit the spark to remote posts without the spark undergoing serious mutations en route.

The idea of compiling the messages of the Prime Minister, scattered as these have been, has come as a welcome innovation. The compilation is presented strictly in the words of the Prime Minister as they were uttered so as to reach the tens of thousands of our workers and the millions of our fellow-countrymen who have not had the opportuntiy of sharing with the Prime Minister that 'spirit of adventure' which one ought to feel as co-sharers in the joint stock enterprise of 'India Limited.' May the light spread till it illumines all the dark crevices we have within and without !

MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
NEW DELHI
April 20, 1957

S. K. DEY

1. MAN : THE ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE

It all depends on how you and I and all of us approach the question. Is it just another of our many schemes—good schemes, no doubt—in which we shall do our day's work and leave the rest to chance or is it something more than that? Is it something which you will direct from above as an administrator, as a Development Commissioner, as a Central Committee or as the Planning Commission and so on, or is it something which will enable you to unleash forces from below among our people to do the work? Forces unleashed without definite aims and without proper coordination sometimes yield good results and sometimes bad. A good lead and a good organization from the top is obviously necessary and essential yet it may be completely useless unless the forces from below are released.

Sometimes, I begin to suspect and become a little afraid of these leads from the top that we, including myself, are always giving. We have got into the habit of doling out good advice to the country, to our people, to everybody. Nevertheless, my own experience has shown that people who give too much advice are unpopular. They are irritating. At any rate, such advice does not conduce to the good of others, as it is intended to. That is to say, if we act too much from the top without adequate foundations and without that intimate relation with the lower rungs, we can hardly achieve any great results. We will achieve something, of course. So the problem becomes one of how to bring about a union of these two elements.

Obviously, it is necessary to plan, to direct, to organize

Inaugural speech at the first Development Commissioners' Conference, Delhi, May 7, 1952.

and to co-ordinate; but it is even more necessary to create conditions in which a spontaneous growth from below is possible. I wonder if this Community Scheme is something which is likely to bring about a union between the top and the others. By the term top, I do not mean that some people are superior; I mean those who guide, the organizers; and by others I mean the millions who will participate in the work. In fact, ultimately there should be no top and no gradations. Nevertheless, I feel that even the organizational lead should not be tossed like a ball from what is the top to what might, if you like, be called the bottom; that is to say, even the initiative for the Community Projects should come, wherever possible, from the people who are most affected by them.

Often, we like to sit in our chambers and decide everything according to what we consider to be good for the people. I think the people themselves should be given the opportunity to think about it and thus they will affect our thinking as we affect their thinking. In this way, something much more living and integrated is produced, something in which there is a sense of intimate partnership—intimate partnership not in the doing of the job but in the making of the job and the thinking of the job. It is that those of us or those of you who are more trained, who have given more thought to the problem and might be considered, to some extent, especially suited to that kind of work are better qualified for thinking and giving the lead than you or I; at the same time, it is equally true that unless those, who may not be specialists but for whom you are working and who ultimately are supposed to work for themselves, feel that mental urge, that impact of the creative spirit within them to think and act, they will not work in the way that we all want them to work.

I do consider that the scheme of Community Projects is something of very great importance and it is so not merely because you can sum up and write down on paper the material achievements of such a project, which I hope will be considerable—all the additional food grown, the houses

built, schools and dispensaries, better roads, tanks, wells and so on. You can make a list of them and it is pleasing to see that list but somehow my mind goes beyond to the man, woman and child. The house may be good but it is the builder of the house that counts ultimately, not the house or even the occupant of the house. Therefore, it is to the builder that my mind goes; we want to make the people of India all builders. These Community Projects appear to me to be something of vital importance, not only in the material achievements that they would bring about but much more so because they seek to build up the community and the individual and to make the latter a builder of his own village centre and of India in the larger sense.

Now, how are you going to proceed? Naturally, not by vague talk and discussion. One cannot have those plans without a very great deal of careful discussion and I am glad to say that there has been a good deal of these discussions in the last two or three months and they have borne some fruit already. Yet a slight fear seizes me when I see all this planning and organization that, perhaps, we might begin to think that this is the major part of our work. That is, we might begin to think, as many of us are apt to do, that, sitting in big buildings and big offices, it is we who are doing the job. We are doing nothing of the kind. We are only indicating how the job is to be done; it is the others who will have to do it. But, somehow, as things are, the persons who do the job are rather diffident. How to give the initiative to the people in these things? How to invest them with that sense of partnership, that sense of purpose, that eagerness to do things?

Looking into my own mind and trying to revive old memories, I remember how at some periods of our existence, individual and national, we did think that way, we did feel that way and act that way. It is this sense which adds to one's stature. Although that kind of thing has happened in this country, whether anything similar can happen again in our life time, I do not know. We may not achieve our former standard because conditions are different. Anyhow, I am of a generation that belongs more or

less to the past and cannot, therefore, speak for others—the younger generation, who ought to feel as we did. Whether we feel that way or not, it seems to me quite obvious that if the tremendous task of re-building India is undertaken, it will have to be undertaken with something much more than the books and statistics, papers and directions and planning and organization that we may put into it. It will have to be undertaken with something fiery and with the spirit that moves a nation to high endeavour. Well, can the Community Projects be looked at that way? Perhaps, I am putting it too high and it is dangerous to put a thing too high, because if you do so you are liable to react the other way.

I suppose there is hardly a country—and I mean no disrespect to other countries—which has such high ideals as India. And I may add that there is hardly a country where the gap between ideals and performance is so big as in India. So it is a dangerous thing to talk big and then not be able to come anywhere near your objective. Nevertheless, occasionally one has even to gaze at the stars even though one may not reach them. Merely to lower your ideals because you think they are too high is not right, even though you might not quite achieve those ideals. How far can we take the Community Projects out of the setting of your offices and make them a scheme for living men and women inspired by something worthwhile to do? That is the problem. We measure and calculate rightly and inevitably about the finances and the resources involved; one has got to do it, one cannot act irresponsibly. However, if I may say so, all these are secondary matters. The primary matter is the human being involved, the man who is going to work, the man who is going to feel it and translate that feeling into action. Are you going to try to create that type of human being? The human being is there, of course: you have only to reach his heart and mind. You can do that but not by doling out advice. Take it from me, do not advise too much: do the job yourself. That is the only advice you can give to others. Do it and others will

follow. Why do you think, it is your business to sit in a big office and issue orders because you are the Development Commissioner? If I may say so with all respect, you are no good if you do that. Better go somewhere else and do some other job. Let us be clear about this.

Whether it is the Development Commissioner or the Administrator, he must not sit in his office and issue decrees all the time. He must take the spade and dig or do something else. No man connected with the scheme, who merely sits in his office, is good enough, as far as I am concerned. If you work, you will make others work. That is the only way of giving a lead and calling upon others to work. We are becoming a lazy people, especially with our hands and feet and often enough intellectually lazy, too. I regret to say, although it has nothing to do with our present work here, that our university standards are going down and, if this is not checked, I do not know how we are to make good in anything big later. However, that is another matter.

Wherever you are, I expect that you should begin your work every morning with a little manual effort, if possible, in furtherance of the Community Projects. You must develop a sense of partnership.

I do not know what our Development Commissioner or the Administrator has done thus far in regard to the production of leaflets, pamphlets, etc., explaining the schemes. I have seen a pamphlet here. It is in English. It is rather businesslike and good. I hope that such pamphlets will be issued in the various languages of India. But much more is required. I want this matter to be explained, not in this businesslike way but in a more human way, so that somehow it may catch the imagination of the people concerned. But what is more necessary is that you, the Development Commissioners, should function in a human way with the people, should talk to them in a friendly way, get to know what they want and explain to them what you propose to do, how it is their work, how it is not something imposed upon them and not even something that is a gift

from above. You should explain to them that it is going to be a project of co-operative endeavour, how they will benefit by it and then their children and their children's children. See that you get to know them somehow, reach their minds and hearts and invite them to work with you; not under your command but with you, so that you gradually form some kind of brotherhood, a fraternity of workers.

I speak, naturally, with some knowledge of my people. I am not afraid of criticizing my people. I have just called them lazy and all that. And yet I do believe quite honestly that the human material we have in India is very fine and, given the opportunity, it can achieve big things. How to give an opportunity to this vast mass of human material—that is the problem. You cannot suddenly give it to all, however much you may plan for it. Of course, you must plan for everybody. No planning which is not for all is good enough. You must always have that view before you and you must prepare the foundations for the next step towards the final goal. And so, you ultimately start a process which grows by itself. Suppose you take fifty-five Community Projects today; you plan next year to take another hundred or whatever the number and so on. You want the number to grow so that in the course of five or six years you may have from 500 to 600 or more centres.

That itself is a tremendous thing covering, as it possibly will, a very large proportion of our population. But I was thinking of something slightly different. Take a centre in one place comprising about a hundred villages; what you do there in a concentrated way will percolate through to the surrounding villages. If the work is too officialized, this will not happen. It will never spread beyond your immediate vision. It must not become something too rigid but be something which has an element of spontaneous growth within it. And that can only happen when you catch the imagination of the people. Then it grows automatically. There is always a danger—I am myself guilty of it often enough—that by direction and authority we may make a thing rigid, not flexible, making it a part of the official hierarchy. Now, official hierarchies are, I suppose, necessary.

But with all the good they do, they have a certain deadening influence on anything that is spontaneous or vital. Community Projects will never grow if they are approached in that way. You must always think of the element of spontaneity.

This kind of project will succeed or fail in the measure that you achieve results within stated periods. There is, of course, a certain amount of vagueness when you approach the people but there must be precision about one thing: about the time in which a thing must be done. That target must be continually before you. And if you do not reach it, well, you fail to that extent.

Really, what we are committed to is not a few community centres but to working for the biggest community of all and that is the community of the people of India, more especially those who are down and out, those who are backward. There are far too many backward people in this country. Besides the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes organizations, there is an organization called the Backward Classes League. As a matter of fact, you can safely say that 96 per cent of the people of India are economically very backward. Indeed, apart from a handful of men, most of the people are backward. Anyhow, we have to think more of those who are more backward because we must aim at progressively producing a measure of equality in opportunity and other things. In the modern world today, you cannot go on for long having big gaps between those who are at the top and those who are at the bottom. You cannot make all men equal, of course. But we must at least give them equality of opportunity. So, I hope that these community centres will not merely pick out the best and most favourable spots and help them develop but also try to work out the problems of the other spots which are backward economically, socially and in other respects and thus gain a wealth of experience of various types and conditions in India, so that this tremendous problem of backwardness may be tackled in the best and quickest way possible.

2. THE SEED THAT IS SPROUTING INTO A PLANT

Young men, you have come to Nilokheri from all parts of India. I am addressing a few words to you from Delhi. It was my desire to be with you and talk to you individually but I could not do so. I am speaking to you from here.

The great work which we are going to take in hand is of tremendous importance for the country. What is this great work for which all of you, selected by various States, have been asked to come here? A special responsibility is cast on those who are selected for a big task. You might have been given details and briefs about this work, which forms part of a big plan. There is a great idea behind this plan, because through it we are going to sow a new seed. This seed will sprout into a plant which, in turn, will grow into a mighty tree to give shade to all the people of this country.

Ours is a big country. It is both an advantage and a disadvantage. It is an advantage because big things can be done only by big countries; and a disadvantage because it is not easy to handle a large population and direct its energies into one channel. We shall hardly be able to undertake this work till we have understood all these essential facts.

We have to remove poverty and ameliorate the lot of the people of our country. Our objective is not the prosperity of only a section of the people. We have to see how 36 crores of people can progress. No such thing can be accomplished through legislation. Nothing would be gained

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Rendering of talk broadcast in Hindi at the inauguration of Project Officers' Training Camp at Nilokheri.

if our Parliament were to enact a law that the country should go forward and that work should be provided to every able-bodied person. Law can, at best, clear the way, but the work has to be done by the people. To enable them to do so we have to enthuse them and kindle a fire within their hearts. We must place before them a complete picture of the future which may guide and inspire them.

There are a number of requisites for such undertakings. Capital is one of them. There are some rich countries in the world, but ours is a poor country. In fact, India is not poor, because the real wealth of a nation is its people. After all, it is they who produce wealth.

Under the plan on which you are going to work, I am told 55 project areas have been selected. This is only the beginning of the Community Development programme. Possibly we may have 400 or 500 of similar centres in time to come. It is work of unprecedented magnitude. You are going to be partners in it, and in the end all the 36 crores of Indians will join you.

You have come to Nilokheri to receive training. Remember that you have to learn a good deal from the villagers. Many social workers go to the countryside, deliver lectures and come back home. They imagine that they have done a good bit of work, but actually that kind of thing is of no value. Wherever you go, you have to learn something from the people whom you meet. No doubt, you have to be their guide, but you have to learn as much from them as you may be anxious to teach them.

There is a peculiar notion current in our country that it is undignified to do manual labour and that this kind of work belongs to the lower castes. We consider all people to be equal and we want to ensure equality of opportunity to all. Nor do we look upon any useful work as low. In countries like Russia, China, America and England, whatever be their policy or political ideology, dignity of labour is fully recognised. I feel that one who does not work with his own hand and does not think such work as dignified is a mere idler, whatever may be his other achievements. It is my honest opinion that every Indian student, whether

he be at school or college, must do sufficient amount of manual labour, in fields or in factories.

The seed which we are sowing today will sprout before long and become a plant. A great responsibility therefore rests on you as first sowers. This consists in learning and working with enthusiasm, because then alone will you be able to put in your best. About 32 years ago a great movement was started in this country. Mahatma Gandhi was its precursor and guiding light. He put his plan before the country and crores of people became his followers. Gandhiji was a great man; we are small people, but when small people undertake big tasks they too become somewhat big. It will be a mistake to imagine that big tasks are done only by high officers and that your own work is not so important. I feel that at the moment no other work in India is as great as the one you are going to begin. Your work is going to be an ordeal and such of you as will be found wanting may have to be sent back.

I hope you will bear all these things in mind and feel that it is a really big undertaking that has been entrusted to you. We have to mould human material. The people of this country are good, but in certain respects they are backward and appear to be somewhat frustrated. They are not quite conscious of the strength which co-operation gives. We have among us advocates of all manner of policies and ideologies. We are quite fond of debates and heated discussions. At times debating is not a bad thing, but work too has to be done by the people. No country can carry on by mere discussions and paper plans.

I am glad that there are also some women among you. The nature of this work is such that it will have to be undertaken by all, men and women, boys and girls. I send you my best wishes. Although I could not come myself, I am sending you this message. You may start your work, looking forward to success. Your report will be put up to me, and I shall go through it. My mind is in the work which you are doing and I shall watch its progress with great interest.

3. WANTED A DYNAMIC LEAD

You have completed about four weeks of training in Nilokheri. The period was, no doubt, short, but if it had been usefully spent, it could be considered fruitful. The point for you to consider is what effect the camp has had on you.

You must also search your hearts to find out whether you are going back to your States with the feeling of a crusader or a missionary. The official way of doing things is the very reverse of what a missionary spirit would inspire, for, the official approach, in spite of certain virtues of its own, has a deadening effect. Its set routine is not particularly suitable when something new has to be done in a new way. In such cases the virtues of an official approach, working according to a set pattern, become its very shortcoming.

Our development plans look very well on paper but one never knows how they would work in practice. In India, there is so much difference between theory and practice that, while ideals soar high, execution is meagre. We are first-rate so far as theory is concerned, but in practice, very often, we are much lower than in other countries, which have lower ideals than ourselves. People are apt to worship Mahatma Gandhi, but what is the point in worshipping him when we are not acting according to his teachings and his philosophy? There should be no gap between theory and practice.

Thirty years ago, it was possible for one man to bring out that 'elemental force' from the Indian people, which

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Observations on meeting the first batch of Project Officers at the conclusion of their training in August 1952.

ultimately brought a foreign Government to its knees. We cannot, however, live in the past. The question now is how to regenerate that 'elemental force' and the urge to do things. It is not a matter for the Planning Commission to do. No planning body can harness the resources of this tremendous human potential.

In Mahatma Gandhi, there was that magnetic personality which moved the masses in a big way and achieved something big. That sort of thing does not happen every day. But, if we could draw out even a small fraction of this 'elemental force', it could work wonders.

The analogy with India's struggle for freedom in the past and the constructive activity which is now being undertaken by the Government, however, is not complete, as Gandhiji's movement was directed towards bringing down a foreign Government, while in the Community Projects, the work to be done is entirely constructive and, therefore, it is in a way more difficult. But in this business of building up a nation there is a tremendous drama.

I felt proud to see a fine band of Indian engineers doing extremely good work at the Damodar Valley. But I was sorry to find that thousands of workers who were participating in that big scheme of nation-building did not know what they were doing and did not have any idea of the big work in which they were participating. I called these workers and explained to them the objects of the D.V.C., how it would bring millions of acres of land under cultivation, prevent destruction by floods, bring electric power to millions of homes and factories and raise the standards of living of the people. The workers were happy that they were helping a big undertaking—there was a glimmering hope and pride on their faces.

The worker at the lowest rung must be made to feel that he is a partner in the tremendous enterprise of building up his country. He must acquire a sense of glory in the work which he is doing. To generate this feeling among the workers, it is essential that the Project Officers themselves should first imbibe that spirit. You must be charged

before you can charge others; you must be dynamic before you can make others dynamic.

This elemental force that has to be drawn out, this vitality which has to be regenerated will, however, be of not much use, unless we know how to do the job. The question of technique thus comes up. There has been, in modern times, a tremendous advance in technology in the West and we must take advantage of this. India went down before the West mainly because of the advance in technology that the West had achieved.

India paid no attention to technology with the result that the development of thought, not on the philosophic side but in the practical technological aspect, was static, crippling, and limited our outlook. This was rather unusual for a people, who in the earlier periods of Indian history, had sailed across the seas, carrying trade as far west as Europe and as far east as Japan, for a people whose philosophy and religion had crossed mountains and seas and ruled the hearts of men and women thousands of miles away.

Progress in the modern age is not possible without adequate knowledge of technology. From the Electrical Age of the first half of this century, the world has now advanced to the Atomic Age and in this age we must be first-rate in technology. We have made some progress in this sphere. Since Independence, a series of National Laboratories have been established, which will rejuvenate the spirit of scientific research and develop what could be called a 'scientific temper'.

While knowledge of technology must be disseminated, in propagating this knowledge the Project Officers must not proceed in any spirit of conceit. Do not make any mistake. The average farmer knows much more than you do, because his knowledge is based on experience. If you want to tell him of some better method, you must approach him in all humility and if you can show him better ways he will surely be grateful and adopt them.

The question, therefore, is to draw the villager towards you by your friendly, sympathetic behaviour, in short, to inspire faith in him. Faith is essential since a cynic, how-

ever brilliant, never does anything big because, in spite of his brilliance, he does not have that drive, that energy, that faith which can move mountains.

The 55 Community Projects that have been selected by the Government of India will cover about 17,000 villages. Considering the six lakhs of villages all over India, these 55 projects are relatively small, but if they are successfully implemented, they will affect powerfully the surrounding areas. The idea of Community Projects constitutes a seed which will bloom forth into a magnificent tree if the seed takes root.

The projects undertaken by the Central and the State Governments are, no doubt, important, but immediately they do not touch all the people intimately. Direct association of the millions of rural people can only be had if we have a multitude of small schemes in which hundreds of thousands of people could participate. From that point of view the Community Projects scheme is something well thought-out. We want good results and we consider the money spent on Community Projects as an investment, since, after a certain period, it will set in motion something, which on its own will produce dividends. In fact, it will bring about a big change, but a change without conflict.

Wealth cannot be produced by issuing decrees; it will be produced by labour alone. The problem for India, therefore, is to produce more wealth. In the Community Projects is embodied the idea of peaceful constructive effort, and as such even if it is not fully successful, it will not create that adverse effect which the method of conflict might produce. Secondly, in the Community Development programme, there is something of vast potentiality, ensuring growth from the bottom. That is important as, without understanding this fundamental idea properly, Community Development might be taken into wrong channels.

The idea should be developed on two lines; improvement of the man, and improvement of his technology in small matters. Thirdly, it is most essential to make the villager understand that he will be the maker of his own destiny. He should get rid of that habit of mind which

occasionally makes him think that the Government will do everything for him.

We are living in an extremely interesting and fascinating period of world history. We do not want to be mere lookers-on or playthings of others. My mind is a crowded canvas. There is a certain drama about the conception of our country. The country does not represent a mediocrity. It has done, in the past, good things in a big way and it has also done bad things in a big way. We now have a chance in the Community Development programme for doing good things in a big way, and I hope that everyone will rise to the occasion.

There is a certain lack of vitality among our people, particularly among the middle classes. This is a bad portent as the times are fast changing. It might be a platitude to say—but it is none the less correct—that we in India and the world are passing through a big period of transition. We must adjust ourselves to these changing times.

While we utilise science to the best advantage, it is essential that we keep human values in their proper perspective. Science has so much developed nowadays that—paradoxical though it may appears—the machine has become really human while human beings have become machines. That is not a desirable consummation—human values must win over machines.

4. THIS SACRED WORK

Why have you all gathered here in this hot sun? Today is an auspicious day and we have come here to do sacred work. You have not come to hear me or the President or someone else speak. You have come to

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Address at the inauguration of the Community Projects on October 2, 1952. (English rendering of the speech in Hindi at Alipur, near Delhi).

shoulder a great task. I should have preferred not to have any speeches on this occasion. We have had far too many of them in our country. I too have delivered numerous speeches. We do not think enough of our work but instead are always ready to offer advice and to find fault. The work we are about to start today is in the service of the Motherland, in the service of the land of which we are all part. We should serve her with hard work, with the sweat of our brow. If necessary, we shall shed our blood, so that millions of our countrymen may go forward and that there may be an end to their trials and tribulations.

Why is this day auspicious? Because it is the Gandhi Jayanti Day. We would like to add further sanctity to this occasion by trying to live up to Mahatmaji's teachings. Gandhiji taught us many lessons, but essentially he taught us to work and to serve. Discussions there are bound to be, and they should be there. Ultimately, however, a country advances only through work and not by idle talk. You people believe in work and there is thus no lesson I can teach you. But it is the others like me, who come from the city, who must learn to work quietly and unobtrusively. Work will speak for itself.

The work that we are starting today not only in Alipur but also in many other parts of India is of supreme importance, not merely another occasion for pomp and pageantry. You work to run your homes. The affairs of the country are similarly managed by work and not by idle talk. We are now talking in terms of a big revolution, a peaceful revolution of co-operation, not of turmoil and the breaking of heads. It is in this manner that we shall transform our country. Peacefully, we shall remove the evils of our country and promote a better order. Each one of you must have some grievance or another and my heart is heavy with sorrow. A bad thing about our country is that people complain too much. We all have our shortcomings and there are many defects in our country. They cannot be removed by complaining but only by hard work. I hope and trust that the work that has begun today, on the 2nd October, the Gandhi Jayanti Day, will be done well. It

will, I hope, make progress and shake up the country and bring about a revolution. In this work America, a great country, has helped us and we are grateful to her. But remember that no country can advance with outside aid only. Ultimately, a country progresses because of its own strength and work. How can we complete our work and win our battle with another man's strength? The task before us is in the nature of a trial of strength. So let us start this sacred work and continue it with vigour so that our country may become happy and prosperous.

5. THE MOTIVE FORCE

The Community Programme constitutes the dynamo providing the motive force for the successful implementation of the Five-Year Plan. The whole object of the Community Development Programme is to raise the general level of the standard of living of the average man—an object which in the Indian context is quite a revolutionary thing. Whether we can bring about this revolution in a peaceful, co-operative way is of the highest importance, because violent methods demand a tremendous initial price and their ultimate outcome is totally uncertain.

In a fast-changing world India stands out as something solid, but unless the people work hard, this solidity will fade away. We have, therefore, to be wary and strive hard to maintain and strengthen our independence through economic development, which is basic and fundamental. The Five-Year Plan, because of the limitations of available resources, did not go very far, that is, as far as circumstances demanded, but its approach was excellent. The effort of the people should be to make it go further. In this effort,

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Address at Development Commissioners' Conference, New Delhi, April 18, 1953.

the Community Development programme and the National Extension Service, which will be shortly finalized, have a very vital role to play. If through the operation of these programmes a change of outlook among the people is generated, we will go a very long way, because with a change in the people's outlook, the pace of progress will be much faster.

The biggest revolution that has happened in the modern world is the technological revolution which has totally changed the face of the world. Technology means power but in order to take full advantage of it the mind must be prepared to appreciate its significance in a historical perspective and to adjust it to the requirements of the situation on hand.

India is passing through a crucial period—a period of transition from foreign rule to an independent prosperous nation. When foreign rule disappeared from the country, it kept certain artificial structures, for example, the Princes. The entire structure soon collapsed. In fact, the world was amazed at the rapidity with which it collapsed; the main reason was that such structures, which were artificially propped up, did not have any inherent strength; with the removal of the prop they crumbled. None the less, some time must be taken for the change-over to be completed and the period of transition is necessarily somewhat painful.

Again, removal of foreign rule from India meant release of all kinds of forces which for so long had remained suppressed. It is no use getting angry with such forces. We have to bring about a revolution on many fronts. But this revolution does not mean breaking of heads. It consists in bringing about a situation which ensures a change of outlook, but the pace of revolution has to be adjusted. If it is too fast, it might bring in counter-revolution. On the other hand, it is necessary that progress should be fast enough as the people are not prepared to wait indefinitely.

In the above context, economic problems assume very great importance, not only because a higher standard of living means a happier existence, but the ultimate strength of a nation is its economic strength. In the final equation

the armed forces of a country constitute only a small part of its strength, the rest of the strength consists of its economic power and the morale of the people. By strengthening the country economically it is possible to satisfy the forces that were let loose by the upsurge of freedom, because it is only by providing a higher standard of living, more employment and more consumer goods that the immediate needs of the people will be satisfied.

But mass production of commodities alone can not raise the standard of living unless there is mass consumption which means that the mass, as a whole, must have greater purchasing power. The simplest way whereby the people, in general, would have greater purchasing power is to create work, which again will keep the industrial machinery functioning.

There is no basic conflict, between big and small-scale industries because there is a vast field which will remain unexplored even after considerable industrial expansion has taken place. But here again technology is most important because small-scale industries can survive and flourish only if their technique is good. There is no doubt that their technique can be improved and it is necessary that people should think of new techniques. In India there is plenty of scope to profit by technological advance; for example, an increase in the production of wheat from 10 md. per acre to about 15 md., which would still be below the average production rate in many advanced countries, will make a world of difference to India. This can be done by the application of intensive cultivation methods and modern agricultural practices.

Fortunately, India has several advantages, one of which is a continuous political leadership before and after Independence. While this provides a certain continuity of thought and action, we should not be complacent about the progress to be made as people are not prepared to wait for long. On the other hand, it is necessary for the people to realise that immediate improvement in the standard of living is a difficult thing to attain as the history of develop-

At the initial period of their planning, these countries had to undergo tremendous sacrifices and privations. India is trying to perform the task of economic upliftment in a democratic way. It is a tremendous challenge to our countrymen. The Community Programme and its successor organisation, the National Extension Service, which constitute the spearheads of rural development work, are something basic and will show how the democratic process of mass development can succeed.

6. CENTRES OF HUMAN ACTIVITY

The name of the periodical (*Kurukshetra*) reminds one of a great epoch and a great war in India's history. On that historic plain, where this war was fought, we fight another war of a very different kind. This is a war against our own failings, against poverty and ignorance, and all their terrible brood.

Let us look upon this struggle in the context of history and that of this vast land of India. We face a terrific problem, and yet the potential helpers are also many. We know that we have the human material and other resources to solve this problem if only we utilise them well.

People talk of money, and money is, no doubt, useful. But it is the human being that counts in the end and it is human beings who have made history and who have advanced the cause of humanity, not money. If we train and prepare the right type of human beings in India, then the rest is easy. Our experience of the last few years has shown us that we can do this and also overcome the difficulties in the way.

All over India we have centres of human activity which are like lamps spreading their light more and more in the

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Message for *Kurukshetra*, October, 1953.

surrounding darkness. This light has to grow till it covers the land. Among these centres, there is Nilokheri which has achieved a good deal of fame in India and outside. That brings a greater responsibility on Nilokheri and on other like centres. They are the examples for others to follow and they must keep up high standards, because it is quality that will tell in the end, not quantity.

I send my greetings and good wishes to all those silent workers throughout the length and breadth of India who are engaged in this tremendous adventure of building up new India.

7. FASCINATING ADVENTURE

I am greatly interested in the development of Community Projects and the National Extension Service and attach the greatest importance to them. The last two years or so have, I think, justified this great experiment and both those who are in some sense connected with this vast undertaking and the general public have begun to realise the significance of this work. It is not merely working for some improvement in some selected places. The concept is much vaster. It means really covering the whole of this great country and building up a new India from the roots upwards. There can be no greater or more fascinating adventure than this. Those of us, who are partners in this work, must therefore have some sense of pride in it and a feeling of exhilaration that they are participating in a historic task.

The bigger the task, the greater the responsibility. This work has grown and continues to grow. It has already covered a substantial part of India and in the years to come

Message for the third Development Commissioners' Conference, Ootacammund, May, 1954.

we hope that it will reach every village in this country. Mere extent, of course, means little. It is the quality of work that counts and the spirit with which it is undertaken. Essentially what we are endeavouring to do is to bring about a peaceful and yet far-reaching revolution in this vast land of India. If we succeed, and succeed we will, then we shall have done in our generation something worthwhile and something that will deserve permanent record. We have many dangers and perils to face and the greatest of these is compancency. If any of us feels complacent, he is out of step and has fallen out. We work in our respective areas, a village or block or a project area or a State, but wherever we might work, we have to think of it as a part of the larger whole. We have to develop, therefore, an integrated view of our work, integrated in many ways.

Indeed, the entire world today demands an integrated view and if we do not succeed in achieving this, conflict and disaster may well descend upon us. But, for the moment, let us forget the world and its problems and think of India and her problems. These are big enough.

We want an integrated India not only politically but emotionally. The essence of planning is to bring about this integration through numerous approaches. Integration means co-operation at every level and an understanding that progress lies in the common effort. Planning means a close co-ordination of the work of the Central Government with that of the States. At the Centre there has to be that co-ordination between the manifold activities of the Union Government. Each Ministry does not stand by itself; it is a part of the Government of India. So also is the relationship between the States and the Centre. This idea of planning, co-ordination and integration should spread in village, in town and in State.

Community Projects envisage co-ordination of a number of activities. They cannot be separated or viewed as isolated activities. The object is to build the human being and the group and to make him and the group advance in many ways. Therefore, the activities in the Community

Project must be closely co-ordinated and worked to this end.

Officials and non-officials have both their part to play in this work. Both are essential. Officials should bring the experience of training and disciplined service. The non-officials should represent and bring that popular urge and enthusiasm which gives life to a movement. Both have to think and act in a dynamic way and develop initiative. The official has to develop the qualities of the popular leader; the people's representatives have to develop the discipline and training of the official. So they approximate to each other and both should be guided by the ideal of disciplined service in a common cause.

We want good men at the top to guide this great movement. But we want even more good men at the village level. We have to train up scores of thousands of village leaders who have a measure of initiative and pride in their work. I hope this conference of Development Commissioners will not be afraid to consider our failings. It is only by looking at them frankly that we can get rid of them. I hope also that their meeting will bring about a new feeling of solidarity and enthusiasm among them which they will communicate to their co-workers all over India.

8. PEOPLE'S PROJECTS

Three years ago I inaugurated the first conference of Development Commissioners for Community Projects. I spoke bravely then of the great task ahead. None of us knew at the time how this new adventure would shape itself and what results it would bring.

Now three years later, the fourth conference of Development Commissioners is meeting to review their work and

Message for the Development Commissioners' meeting at Simla, May, 1955.

to plan for the future. Last year at Ootacammund, after considering the work done during two years, they decided to increase the pace and to spread out this network of Community Projects and the National Extension Service all over India. This was a very brave decision but I take it that the men who came to this decision did so realistically and knowing fully the nature of the task. They were, in fact, men who were themselves shouldering the burden of this vast scheme and were, therefore, talking with full knowledge of both the success obtained and the problems and difficulties ahead.

They are now meeting on the eve of our drawing up the Second Five Year Plan. Within six months' time from now we hope to present a draft of this Plan and within less than a year the Plan should be finalised and should begin functioning. I say finalised, but there can be no finality or rigidity about such a Plan. It must be flexible and capable of change and improvement as fresh experience is gathered. But some targets have to be kept in view and worked up to. There are obvious limiting factors and we cannot merely translate into the words and phrases of our Plan, our hopes and aspirations. While we should be idealistic, we have to be realistic also. We have to calculate our resources. These resources can partly be calculated in terms of past experience and partly in other and more uncertain terms. If our progress is to be faster than in the past, as we hope it should be, then a mere projection of the past is not adequate. The future must necessarily excel the past.

Resources are of many kinds—in money, in labour, in human beings properly attuned to the task before them. This latter is a very flexible and uncertain factor. It may, under fortunate circumstances, exceed any estimate that we can make of it; it may also belie our expectations.

But we have now a certain experience to guide us and this experience of the past few years has increased our faith in our people, made us more self-reliant and emboldened us to think in much bigger terms than in the past.

Much has happened in these few years which has led

to this result. But I think that the most significant development of these years has been in the domain of Community Projects and the National Extension Service. Apart from the practical results which have been achieved —and these are both visible and considerable—there is something even more important, even though it cannot be measured and weighed. This imponderable factor is the spirit of the people, the removal of inertia in thought and action, the development of a team spirit in national work and the sense of partnership of the people in great undertakings.

This represents the new dynamism which is so essential to all progress. It means a social revolution in our ways of life and work which is creeping gradually but surely over the vast land of India.

It is because of this that the Community Projects and the National Extension Service have become, more than anything else, the symbols of the resurgent spirit of India. They have not only moved our own people, more especially in the rural area, but have attracted the attention of other parts of the world, more especially of countries in Asia and Africa which have to face rather similar problems. These Community schemes are not a replica or a copy of something from abroad, although we have learnt much from other countries. They are essentially an Indian growth, suited to Indian conditions and, therefore, with a solid foundation in the soil and the people of India. That is the reason for their strength and their vitality.

The National Extension Service lays a broad foundation all over the country for this work. The Community Projects are the bright, vital and dynamic sparks all over India from which radiate rays of energy, hope and enthusiasm. Both are necessary.

The country is committed to a socialistic pattern of society. To bring about this change we have to do many things in many spheres of activity. But the essential thing is to make freedom secure and broad-based to bring the people in close association and partnership with the apparatus of administration and more especially, with the

working out of our Five Year Plans. We talk of the people's plan and we talk of the people's Community Project. That is the essence of our approach to this question. No great change can be brought about merely by governmental functioning, although that is important, and we aim at great changes. Therefore, it is necessary that these community schemes should be based on the intimate co-operation of the people.

9. IT IS GOING FAST

You know that one of the biggest things that we have done and are doing is the Community Projects and the National Extension Service blocks. I wonder how many of you have been there, because it is something really remarkable that is happening over the face of rural India and, without exaggeration, I say that it is a revolutionary thing that is happening over rural India, wherever these Community Projects are going on.

People coming from other countries have been astounded at what they have seen, but our own people do not realise it. People from diverse countries, England, the United States of America, Russia, Indonesia, Burma, West Asian countries—all these from different view-points have been surprised at this development, development not merely of more production, more this and more that, but the development of the human being. That is the important and the revolutionary thing.

So I should like to think of these projects, planning these broad and big objectives which we have, and I should like you to bring this home to the people through your newspapers, journals, etc., because we want to carry them with us. We can never succeed in this programme unless

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Extracts from remarks at a press conference.

we have the whole-hearted co-operation of a few hundred million people in India. We propose to have it fast. Only then we will get adequate resources and only then we will get the atmosphere, self-reliance, etc. partly because of the success of the last Five Year Plan, the food position and some other things.

We have a good beginning, because the successful Community Projects have produced a new atmosphere in these areas and the Community Projects and the National Extension Service blocks are functioning today in a hundred thousand villages of India—a large number—and by the end of next year it will be 150,000 or so. It is going fast. Our main problem, in fact, is training of personnel for these on the lowest grade, the Village Leve. Worker, the supervisor, this, that and the other. Having done that, our main problem still remains that these should be run by non-official sources by public co-operation.

10. CHANGING THE FACE OF RURAL INDIA

Training becomes necessary today in whatever field of activity you may be engaged in. In the field of activity which ought to require the utmost training, unfortunately, there are no tests; it is haphazard. I am referring to the politicians' work. No standard of training is laid down for them. In every other kind of work, there are set standards; whether it is scientific work, engineering, medicine, carpentry, etc., training is required. Sheer enthusiasm will not make you a good carpenter, an engineer or a doctor. Sheer enthusiasm, however, may make you a good politician. A politician may take people in. It is unfortunate.

Now, therefore, if India is to progress, we must have trained personnel in every walk of life. The more training

Extracts from speech delivered at Madras, October 2, 1955.

we have, the more easily we become a first-class nation. We have our Community Projects and National Extension Service schemes. I do not think there is any example that I know of anywhere to compare with the rapid and tremendous expansion of these works in India in the rural areas. It started just three years ago. Now we are covering about 1,20,000 villages or more and we hope to cover about 5,00,000 villages in the course of the next six years. It is an astonishing and ambitious programme that we have. All these Community Projects require trained men. There are some first-class men at the top, some trained overseers and village workers. But the point is that we want trained men. And the next question arises whether the type of trained men we want in the country are produced in our training centres, in our universities and the like. It is a difficult problem.

We are setting up a large number of training establishments for engineers, overseers, village workers, community workers, etc. Nevertheless, this question is there. Ultimately, it is not for lack of money that our work will stop. It will be for lack of trained personnel in some field or other; because, if we have a number of trained people in one field, there might be a bottleneck with regard to trained personnel in another and work stops. So, inevitably, we have various grades of trained people and untrained people. In this vast undertaking of building up a new India we are all partners.

I go about from one end of India to the other seeing new factories and great things taking shape, and great river-valley projects developing and generating power and supplying water to our fields. I see in the rural areas our Community Projects and National Extension Service schemes spreading with speed which is remarkable and unprecedented in history. This is the biggest thing happening. Not this factory (Perambur Integrated Coach Factory) or hundred such factories, but only the hundreds of Community Projects could change the face of rural India. That is the great revolution which is taking place in India today, in the heart of India, in the villages of India which

have been the backbone of our country for thousands of years. As I see this, I feel an excitement creeping over me to find a new India gradually taking shape, a new India not only in the things we are building, in the factories and the projects and the development schemes but even more so in the men, women and children, who are being helped to grow into their own in these various ways.

I think nothing has happened in any country in the world during the last few years so big in content and so revolutionary in design as the Community Projects in India. They are changing the face of rural India and in the course of the next five or six years they will cover every village in India. It is a tremendous adventure and we shall only succeed if we consider it our common adventure. We must all work together for it. Men, women and, if I may say so, boys and girls and children, all of us have to take our share.

There is an idea current in this country, more than any other, that the person who does not do manual labour but sits at the table, is somewhat superior to the person who does manual work. I want to tell you quite frankly that I think the engineer who does not do manual work is not fit for the job, however high his position may be. The moment he thinks that he is above the manual work and that he is merely there to order about others, he ceases to function adequately. I appeal to almost every human being and, certainly, to the engineer that he should roll up his sleeves and get down to work and show to others how things can be done. In the United Kingdom, America, or the U.S.S.R., an engineer is not sitting in the office and issuing orders. The biggest people there do manual work. They get down on their knees and do work. But due to our caste tradition and the British official tradition we have numerous barriers. We have to uproot those barriers.

We have committed many mistakes; we are constantly committing mistakes, I may tell you, but at any rate, I hope we have the wisdom to know that we commit mistakes and try to correct them.

11. A BIG AND WORTHWHILE TASK

We have many conferences for which Ministers or officials gather together from the four corners of India. Sometimes I have pointed out that perhaps we have too many conferences, but the fact is that it is important for people from the different States to meet together frequently to discuss their common problems. India is a big country, and its problems have both a certain unity and a diversity. It is, therefore, important that all these problems should be viewed in the perspective and in the context of India as a whole. Our objective is to encourage a uniform development of India and not to increase the disparities that already exist in various areas.

Among these many conferences, the conference of Development Commissioners for Community Projects and National Extension Service have come to be of the highest importance to us. Conceived originally in a relatively small way, they grew rapidly and became something in the nature of a revolutionary force changing the face of rural India. That itself showed that they answered an urgent need of the time. They have made not only a difference in India and put a new life in the areas where they have functioned, but they have also attracted widespread attention from beyond the borders of India.

The success of these Community Programmes is partly due to the fact that they are not mere imitations of something happening elsewhere, but have grown out of the soil of India, and in line with the needs of today. Therefore,

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Message to the fifth Development Commissioners' Conference, May, 1956.

they are realistic and practical, in addition to being idealistic.

We have decided on developing a socialist pattern of society in India, and the Second Five Year Plan provides a foundation for this on which we shall have to build in the future. The Community Development Programme and the National Extension Service should form the essential ingredients of this foundation. To a large extent, these Community Programmes have put a new life in the countryside. The time now is for sustained and intensive work. This work must be directed more specially to:

(1) increased production in agriculture; and
(2) growth of village industries, which should progressively be organised as producers' co-operatives.

It must always be remembered that our production from land is exceedingly low, lower almost than that of any other country. All our future progress depends on increasing this production and going far beyond even the mark set for it in the Second Five Year Plan. If other countries, similarly situated, can increase their food production rapidly, there is no reason why we should not do so. This means essentially intensive cultivation, better seeds, better techniques, fertilizers, etc. It does not mean the introduction of any large-scale machinery. In this work, our Gram Sevaks and others should take an important part. Our Development Commissioners must realise that our success in this matter will largely be the measure of our success not only in the Community Scheme but in the Second Five Year Plan itself.

The Community Programme should necessarily keep in line with the village panchayats and co-operatives. We should develop the people's initiative in all these matters, so that they may rely upon themselves far more than on governmental agencies.

The target set in the Second Five Year Plan for the Community Programme is to cover the entire country. That is a big and worthwhile task, and it will require hard work from everyone. It will require the training of

technical personnel. Above all, it will require faith and enthusiasm and the capacity to co-operate.

12. A NEW DIRECTION TO THE PROGRAMME

In the last three or four years we have built up a rather remarkable and rather, if I may use a very strong word, a wonderful organization, and that is the Community Development Organization, both for the Community Project aspect and for the National Extension Service. At the present moment I have not got the exact figures here, but roughly it covers a hundred million people in our rural areas, and that is farily large coverage. And this is increasing, of course, every year. This is not a coverage for show purposes. You cannot 'show' several hundred thousands of villages; a few might be. In the process of the next few years, it is intended to cover the whole of rural India with this programme.

The first thing I should like the House to appreciate is the organizational aspect of it. For the first time we have built up an organization whereby in these particular areas, which come within the scope of that organization, we can reach from the top to the cultivator. There are links. The great difficulty in the past has been that very fine decisions were taken and resolutions were made by the Government of India or the State Governments. but they never trickled down to the poor farmer.

For the first time in our Community Development Organization we have built up a magnificent organization. I am not for the moment talking about the work that has already been done. It has been very good. There are at the present moment 15,000 Gram Sevaks. We give them a year's training. By and large, the Gram Sevaks and Gram Sevikas are a fine lot, earnest, enthusiastic, know-

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Extract from a speech in the Lok Sabha, September 13, 1956.

ledgeable to some extent, and disciplined. They have done a very good piece of work. The Community Development Organization has been interesting itself in agricultural matters. That is one of its chief jobs. But now we want to turn its attention much more pointedly and aggressively towards this agricultural development and make it almost its chief function. I do not wish to deprive it of its other functions which are highly important because, to some extent, it is the other functions that have given the tone to that organization and that have aroused the enthusiasm of the people. Therefore, the other functions are important, but having built up that, we now want to turn it—and we are doing—in this direction.

How can we do this? This first thing is that the Community Projects Organization should, here at the Centre, be brought in close touch with our Food and Agriculture Ministry. Secondly, it should be in the closest touch with the State Agriculture Ministries. There has been, in the past, a fair measure of co-operation between the Community Projects Administration and the Food and Agriculture Ministry. But we want to bring them much closer together so that they may think alike and work alike and push alike. I would appeal to the State Agriculture Ministries also to co-operate and to receive the co-operation and help of the Community Development organization in the fullest measure and utilise the great organization. The Community Projects in the States are not worked by the Government of India or by the Planning Commission: they are worked by the States. I have found that, although they are worked by States and worked very well by the States, —the Chief Minister is usually interested in this, the principal development officer is an officer of a very high degree and, therefore, one of the best—yet in some of the States, subject to any recent change, the connection between their own development officer working in the Community Projects and their Agriculture Ministries is not the closest. They work in different compartments. We want to remove that. I have not the shadow of a doubt that if this marriage between the Agriculture Ministries at the Centre and

the States and the Community Projects Administration takes place, the results will be very gratifying.

13. THROUGH TRIAL AND ERROR

Eight years have passed since Independence came to India. They have been hard years for all of us. Much has been done during this period and much remains to be done. We have committed many mistakes and through trial and error we have struggled forward.

Is tarah tai hamne ki hain manzilain,
Gir pare, gir kar uthhe, uthh kar chale.

Probably this is the best method, for only through personal experience does an individual, a group or a nation progress. Any achievement that comes too easily by some fortunate chance does not bring with it that experience and the training that comes from it. We have to pay a price for everything of value that we get. Freedom, cheaply won, or accidentally arrived at, may also be lost cheaply or accidentally. It is only the hard-won victories that are worthwhile and that endure.

The solid basis for our independence in India is not what happened in the last stages in 1947, but the long training and experience, suffering and sacrifice of thirty years and more. Perhaps some of the younger generation today do not quite appreciate this and imagine that success can come easily and without that training and paying the cost. The moment Independence came, we realised immediately that it was but a stage in a long journey. There was no time to rest and, immediately, we were confronted with problems of terrific magnitude. We knew, of course, that freedom would bring economic problems in its train. But we were suddenly confronted by the great tragedy that

Message for '*Kurukshetra*' anniversary number, October, 1956.

followed the partition of India. No one who saw the horror of those days, the interminable trek of dispossessed and suffering humanity, will ever forget it. With sorrow in our hearts but with firm determination, we faced this mighty problem. We had then with us our great leader to give us strength and courage and hope. We did not know that he would leave us soon. A few months later tragedy again convulsed our land, for that leader who had brought us to Independence and trained and disciplined us was suddenly struck down by the hand of an assassin. Again, with eyes wet with tears and hearts numbed with sorrow, we clenched our teeth and faced our problems.

The great migrations were a severe test for us. Out of them, however, came many new experiences, both to those who had suffered and to those who sought to help them.

Among these many experiences was Nilokheri. Out of Nilokheri grew the concept of community organization and centres. Other places had experimented in this in a different way. There had been Etawah and Faridabad among them. But Nilokheri became the basic symbol.

From this grew the idea of the Community Projects Organization and later the National Extension Service. I think that we may modestly claim to have achieved a great deal in many fields of human endeavour during these past years in India. But I believe that the most significant development in India has been this develompent of the Community Projects and National Extension Service in the vast rural areas of India. For the first time, it may be said with truth, we tackled the rural problem in a realistic way. This was not merely from above but rather by inducing the people themselves to solve their own problems. Something life-giving went to them and their eyes brightened and their arms began to function and their muscles became stronger. A process of rejuvenation set in. This has spread already to every remote village and hamlet in this great country.

The National Extension Service is the basic organization that we are developing all over the country. But this

is the foundation on which has to be built the living structure of the Community Projects. Without the Community Projects, the National Extension Service is in danger of becoming a routine organization without the breath of life in it. Therefore, it has become important to develop both and for the Community Projects to be adequately spread all over the country, setting standards for even those areas where they have not been started.

It was hoped that this process of covering India with Community Projects and the National Extension Service would be completed by the end of the Second Five Year Plan. That was a tremendous task, for it required the training of multitudes of persons. We still hope to do so.

Because of the basic importance of the Community Projects, those who are intimately connected with them were anxious to spread them so that they might cover half the area, that is, they should be fifty per cent of the total effort. Many difficulties were pointed out and after long argument it was decided that we should aim at a minimum of forty per cent for the Community Projects. This decision was recently taken by the National Development Council and it is on these lines that we have to work.

We have thus to cover the whole of India with the National Extension Service and a minimum of forty per cent of this has to be Community Projects. I hope that we shall succeed in this great endeavour.

I send my good wishes to the innumerable workers, in various capacities, in this tremendous adventure of changing the face of India. Already it has attracted the attention of many other countries. But, what is more important for us is that it has given life to the people of our villages and out of that life many good things can come.

14. A NEW PHASE

The Community Development schemes have now entered a new phase of their existence. A new Ministry of the Government of India deals with them and is named after them. Probably this is the only instance where a country has a special Ministry for Community Development.

This in itself shows not only the growth of the work of the Community Projects and the National Extension Service but also recognition of this growth and its vital importance. With this change comes greater responsibility. Having known how this work has been carried on during the past four years under the leadership of Shri Surendra Kumar Dey, I am assured that this Ministry will justify itself under its new Minister.

I have referred frequently of late to food production being increased at a rapid pace. I have referred also to the need for us to build up co-operatives in all our rural areas. There are primary and essential needs, round the fulfilment of which revolve the nation's economy and progress.

While this is so and has to be remembered always, the basic fact remains that our purpose is to build up human beings and to make them better in every way. The task of our Community Development schemes is to bring the message of hope to the masses of our people, to teach them self-reliance and confidence in themselves and the way to realise our objectives through hard and co-operative effort.

A new chapter has begun in this fascinating story of

Message on the fourth anniversary of the Community Development Programme, October 2, 1956.

rural India, a new drama is being played in our broad fields and our innumerable villages. The actors in this drama are the tens of thousands of our village workers, organizers, etc. Indeed, the actors should include every man and woman and even child. May all of them have this sensation of playing in this great game of building up India, this great adventure that should ennoble their lives. It is through great effort that we grow, it is by allying ourselves to great causes that we also develop some touch of that greatness.

15. THE RIGHT APPROACH TO THE PEOPLE

I have spoken very frequently about Community Development schemes and laid great stress on them. I have often said that they are the most revolutionary thing that is happening in India and I mean it. I have felt, ever since we started, that they had the elements of basic revolution in rural India. Subsequent years have not changed my conviction; in fact they have added to it. It is not necessary, therefore, for me to say anything in defence of or in praise of this programme to which I attach great importance.

It is a good thing, I think, that almost on the eve of this Conference the Evaluation Organization's Report came out; and suddenly I find that most newspapers in India have been jerked into saying something about the work of the Community Development schemes because of this Report. Naturally they have tended to lay stress on the criticisms in that Report, and, quite rightly, and have felt that we have not been as successful as we claim to be. Perhaps it is so. So far as we are concerned, I think, while we must necessarily have some kind of a crusading spirit about this programme and about this work, it is far more important

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Extracts from address at Development Commissioners' Conference, Mussoorie, April 29, 1957.

that we lay stress on mistakes made or the things not done, and which should actually have been done. In fact, it is more by the results of such evaluations than by messages from the Prime Minister and the like that the success of the programme can be assessed.

Now, I do not quite know what to talk about. You have, I believe, twenty Committees here discussing various aspects of Community Development work and many points have come out. I have listened to some. I wish I had been here for other discussions too. I have the feeling that it is of the highest importance that we should succeed in rural India. I must say that although we are trying to establish heavy industries and the like, which are very important and essential, we cannot raise living standards and get going in India unless we come back to the vast rural population and activise it. Factories and other things are important but the greater part of our resources come from agricultural operations in the rural areas.

Last year, I remember, the Prime Minister of Canada told me that people did not realise where the principle resources come from. Canada is a highly industrialised nation and you probably know there has been a tremendous boom in that country. They discovered oil in vast quantities and so many other things, and thus made enormous sums of money. Yet, the Prime Minister told me that all these things and big industries gave them just what one province gave them through agriculture. The name of this province was Alberta and it produced more wealth in terms of wheat than all the industries of Canada put together. If that is so in Canada, you can well realise the importance of agricultural production in India.

The Chairman in his opening address stressed the importance of increasing agricultural production in India. This is vital because even a slight addition to agricultural production can give us far more resources than we can get out loans or gifts from outside or inside the country. Another important aspect is that the democratic apparatus of political consciousness demands betterment. We cannot

wait and leave rural areas to wait, till we do something and then come back to them, because in the final analysis, it is the people in the rural areas that elect most of the members to Parliament and the State Assemblies. They can make governments and upset governments.

How can an increase in agricultural production be brought about? Training in improved techniques is no doubt essential. But what is far more important is the correct approach to the people, the need for generating a new spirit of excitement, of doing things, in the people. I remember how Gandhiji, not long ago, electrified the whole nation with a new hope and ambition. He was a remarkable individual and we cannot compare with him. Nevertheless we can learn something from him. We should discard the air of superiority and identify ourselves with the villagers by apprcaching them in their dress, talking to them in their language, partaking of their food and by squatting with them on their floor. The strict official approach at once creates a wide gulf between us and the villagers and does not achieve any results.

Now, a great deal is said about the evils of bureaucracy. Yet any system—Socialist, Communist or a Welfare State—has got to be bureaucratic. After all, governments are run by large numbers of people. What is needed is that the gap which separates the bureaucrat from the people must disappear so far as it can. This is all the more necessary in the case of persons working for the Community Development organization. You must shed your official character and gain the confidence of the people. We have aroused tremendous expectations and yet we know that the task before us is such that it cannot be completed for a long, long time. You cannot really convert the whole of India and get something into it in the course of four years, five years or ten years. But I think we can bring about a change faster than most people think. Once you get to pull our people out of certain ruts of inaction, their pace will increase. What you should aim at is to pull them out and set them

on the right path and make them march along it as fast as they can go.

Now we have talked about co-operation. It is not merely an economic question, but rather more basic. On the international plane it has become of tremendous importance that countries should live in peace together, should tolerate each other. Otherwise the whole world is in danger of perishing. There is no-in between place. The development of humanity through science and technology has brought people so close to each other's activities that they have to co-operate or to quarrel. Now if that applies on the international scale, obviously it applies much more on the national scale. In countries—more developed countries —they do co-operate. Now we in India, inspite of our political unity, have not yet developed that emotional unity. I have no doubt that so far as agriculture is concerned, you will not only be able to take advantage of the present technical advances, but of the many things that are going to come in the future, unless you can function either as a very big farm or on a co-operative scale. Big farms we do not want. We don't want huge landlords and all that. But on the co-operative scale, let small men get together and work together and take advantage of scientific advancement in agriculture, with the peasants retaining their individual identities. I have no doubt, therefore, that the only way of work will be of co-operative farming. But as I said, we cannot and we should not impose this. Now I have a very definite and clear distincton between the co-operative working of farms, etc., and collective working. There is a vast difference in quality, apart from quantity. I don't myself like the collective way because I want the individual to feel a certain intimate touch with his partner in business, but all this is not for us to decide. We let things go and see how things happen, but I do feel that we should keep this ideal and tell people about it. Let them understand, and if possible, work it out. That is the first thing in co-operative working. Do it by all means, but unless you put this idea across to the people all the time and train them, make them think about it, it will be difficult to

convert them and then there will be delay in achieving what you want to do. But remember, I want this not only for greater production and the use of science in it, but also to develop co-operative thinking, the habit of working together. The individual farmer is an excellent person—a small farmer or a big one—but he is rather too self-centered, and he cannot remain self-centered in the future, because of scientific advancement. If he does not bring his mind out of that self-centeredness, then he is bound to be in difficulties in the future. So, apart from the practical consequences, psycholcgical and other consequences also convince me that we should go in this direction.

There was some talk about the Bhoodan Movement, Gram Dan, etc. It is obvious that no Government can go about asking people to give up their land. It cannot be a governmental policy. You cannot base your policy on people giving up their land all over the country and, if not all over the country, you cannot pick up people and ask them to do it. But I have no doubt in my mind that Acharya Vinoba's movement has a great significance, practically for what it achieves, and for the new psychology that it creates in regard to land and landholdings; it weakens a little the terrific passion for private possession of land, and that is a good thing. Therefore, I for my part, and certain others, welcome it and in a distant way try to encourage it by cur sympathy. It would have been rather absurd for me as Prime Minister to go about talking to people to give up land. In the nature of things, Government cannot do that. But Vinoba's movement is essentially in the right direction, both from what it achieves and from the happiness it creates. What is Vinoba's ideal, is my ideal also. I welcome this movement. I think that land should be held in common by the people of the village, and that co-operative farming should be encouraged on such land. I do think that the Community Development movement should co-operate, in so far as it is possible, with Vinobaji's Gram Dan or Bhoodan movement. There may be many difficulties in the way, as somebody mentioned here; I think most of the difficulties

will probably be removed if it is discussed in a frank way. Our approach should be a friendly, co-operative one, trying to understand, and explaining to them what we cannot do. Situated as we are, we cannot do certain things. After all, you are all representatives of Governments trying to find a way out to co-operate to the best possible extent. Without Government co-operation I do not quite see what the Bhoodan Movement can do with the land. In fact, it has been getting co-operation. Acts have been passed by the State Legislatures, and so these villages will be in a sense a part of the Government.

To speak for myself frankly I am not really enamoured of the Indian village, as it is. I want it to change completely, gradually no doubt, but completely. I do not see why we should praise all the backwardness of the Indian village. I admit that a peasant is a finer man than a city man. This is perfectly true, but he is backward. Why should we keep him backward? I want villages to have all kinds of amenities. I do not think our villages can remain isolated for long from the rest of the country. All kinds of forces will powerfully influence them, as India changes. That will be a welcome change.

I am glad that some kind of a close liaison is being established between the Community Development movement and the Central Social Welfare Board. In so far as women and children are concerned, it would be wrong for the Community Development people to have a separate organization. They should take advantage of the work of the Central Social Welfare Board in this field. This Board has done one very good thing. It has put a lange number of women into the field of child welfare. This is very important because women can influence children much more powerfully than men. I wish more village women could be associated with such work. They may be uneducated, but in the long run they will do better work than educated city women, because they are in more intimate touch with the people.

In the end, I will say a few words about training. I have no formal suggestions to make, but I do not want you

to develop a caste of trained people. Perhaps untrained people, who have good ideas, who have faith, enthusiasm, energy and capacity for doing hard work can carry your message much further than your trained men. In the early stages of Gandhiji's movement we had no trained people; we had men and women who had faith, energy and enthusiasm. They carried his message all over the countryside like wild fire. Do not, therefore, be afraid of using untrained people, wherever you can, provided you think they have some energy and enthusiasm. You arouse in them the necessary enthusiasm and they will go round and spread your message to the villages without interfering with the rest of your work.

16. THE SALT OF THE EARTH

Every year I am asked to send a message to Kurukshetra for the Community Development programme. I have gladly done so because of my great interest in this programme and the importance I have attached to it.

This programme now covers more than half of rural India and it is advancing with the intention of covering all our villages.

But it is not the extent of its coverage or the number of villages that are included in this scheme that is of primary interest to me. What I am deeply interested in is the quality of the work done and the extent to which this programme is vitalising our rural people and producing better human beings.

Nothing can be more important than this vital work of building Indian humanity. It is the peasant who has borne the burden of India for ages past. It is on the growth and betterment of our peasantry that the future of India

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Message for *Kurukshetra* anniversary number, October, 1957.

must necessarily depend. Today we are laying the greatest stress on two lines of advance—greater food production and more cottage and small scale industries. Food has become the corner-stone of our planning and this means more intensive growth. We have made many appeals in the past for this purpose and they have brought results. The time has now come not merely for general appeals but for a specific and planned approach to each village and almost to each family, so that targets may be laid down and we may work up to them.

What is the future of our peasantry ? The great number of them have barely one or two acres of land to cultivate. It is possible and necessary to increase the yield of this little patch of land and thus to better somewhat the condition of the peasant. But there is a limit to this, the limit laid down by the smallness of that holding.

There are too many people in India subsisting on land. This means that many people must take to other activities and occupations. Some of these can be whole-time activities and some part-time allied to agriculture. Herein was the importance of our cottage and small scale industries programme. No doubt, as large industries grow up many people from the rural area will be attracted to them. But however, speedy the growth of large industries, the major problem of unemployment and other occupations will not be solved by them. It can only be progressively solved by the development of cottage and small scale industries.

Even so, how will the peasant function with his small patch of land ? It is not possible for him to take advantage of modern techniques or the facilities offered by new methods unless he works in co-operation with others of his kind. Co-operation is the key to his future growth and the co-operative movement thus must spread all over the country and comprise all the villages and peasants of this vast land.

What kind of co-operation ? There are the so-called Service Co-operatives, there are those which deal with credit. We have in the past laid stress mostly on credit

co-operatives and they are no doubt helpful but they are not enough. We must cover a much larger field through our co-operative movement. Indeed, the co-operative movement should enter into the life of the peasant in as many ways as possible and, together with the Panchayat, must be the main bulwark of our rural structure. The next stage of co-operation is joint farming and there has been some argument about this. I have no doubt that joint farming, wherever possible and agreed to, will be good, but it must be clearly understood that this can be no imposition and can only be brought in by the agreement of the parties. To begin with, there must be the Service Co-operatives and as these succeed, the next step may well be some joint farms. Where new land is brought into cultivation, it may be possible to have this joint cultivation to begin with.

I would prefer relatively small co-operatives comprising one or two or three villages. It seems essential to me that a co-operative should not be controlled from above, not too officialised, but should represent the spirit of self-reliance and self-growth of the people. Also there should be an intimacy about its members, otherwise it becomes impersonal and difficult for the villagers to consider as something their own.

The whole movement, as our entire political and economic structure in India, must be conditioned by the democratic process.

The Community Development programmes have undertaken a mighty task and they are gradually building up a trained and peaceful army of young men and young women. If they are trained properly and work well, they will be the salt of the Indian earth.

17. THE WEB AND WOOF OF RURAL INDIA

My colleague, S. K. Dey, has asked me again for my annual message for the National Conference on Community Development. I am beginning to doubt the value of such messages, but my interest in the work of Community Development is so great and my regard for S. K. Dey is such that I cannot very well say no to his request.

There is abundant criticism of the work being done in the Community Development areas. Much of this criticism may well be justified. But the major fact remains that the Community Development programme in India is by far the most revolutionary thing that we have undertaken and the results so far achieved are truly astonishing. I say this knowing full well that we have failed in many places and in many ways to do what we intended to do. It is only five and a half years ago that we started this programme and now it is the web and woof of rural India. This is not so much because of its vast spread over hundreds of thousands of villages, but rather the new life which it has been creating and which we see bubbling up where there was stagnation and lifelessness before. In fact, we have roused new forces from the depths of India and the question is how far we can direct them into right channels.

It is the business of this National Conference on Community Development to consider the multitude of problems that face them and to give proper direction. In the ultimate analysis, it is men and women that we are training and making. Everything flows from the trained, self-reliant and co-operative individual. We have to train the indivi-

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Message for the Community Development Conference at Mount Abu, May, 1958.

dual and we have to develop the spirit of community life. It is only through self-reliant co-operation that our people will flourish and go ahead. I am a member of Government and I think that Government must play a great part in this business of building up a new India. But I am convinced that the real vital energy comes from the people and not from Governments.

What do we aim at ? To have in every village a school, a panchayat and an all purpose co-operative. Thus we lay the basic foundations for our political, economic and cultural develoment and build up self-governing democratic units in the larger democracy of India.

What are our immediate objectives ? Considerable increase in agricultural production and, more especially, production of food-grains, and development of village and small industries. An increase in our food production is of vital importance today. Indeed it is far the most important problem that we have to solve in the near future. Everything else depends upon it. Industries will only flourish with the growth of agriculture and the amenities in village life that we want will also flow from our progress in agricultural production.

Community Development in India has arrived at a crucial stage. Future success will be measured, not in vague impressions but in actual production, of foodgrains especially. Every Community Block, therefore, must keep this in mind and work unceasingly to bring this about. Every Block must go down to each village and each peasant household to ensure that this effort is made on the widest individual scale.

The Community movement must now pass progressively to the people. Government help and participation is necessary and will continue. But it has now to become more and more a people's movement and not something officially run from above.

In order to awaken the people, it is the woman who has to be awakened. Once she is on the move, the household

moves, the village moves and the country moves and, through the women, the children are brought into this picture and given the opportunities of a healthier life and better training. Thus, through the children of today, we build the India of tomorrow.

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"I have said it often and I repeat it here that in the implementation of the Five Year Plan, our approach must be to produce a sensation of partnership with the man in the village. The Five Year Plan of India is a people's plan, and in its implementation a feeling should be generated among the people so that each man, woman and child in India became as it were, a partner in 'India Ltd.', jointly engaged in the great task of building a new India....

"The basic test of an officer of new India should be whether he can draw out the co-operation of the people. If the official who is in charge cannot do that, it does not matter how clever or able he is: he is just not suitable for the task."

—*Jawaharlal Nehru*

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